

W. C. Milner

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Diocese of Fredericton,

DELIVERED AT

HIS VISITATION

HELD ON

June 30th, 1880,

BY

JOHN, LORD BISHOP OF FREDERICTON,

AND

METROPOLITAN OF CANADA.

Published at the request of the Synod of the Diocese.

ST. JOHN, N. B. :

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CHARGE
TO THE
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OF THE
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CHARGE.

Reverend and Dear Brethren,—It seems desirable that at certain periods of our life we should pause and look within us to see what proof we are making of our Ministry, and how far the objects which daily engross our time are helping us in the work of our salvation and the salvation of others. At such periods our minds may be withdrawn from many of the passing excitements of the day, and our eyes may be more steadily fixed on great moral and religious questions which concern the well-being of the spiritual Body to which we belong. The holiness of our members, our unity in the principles and rules given us by the Church herself, and the true methods of progress and permanence in well-doing, together with some regard to our financial condition, may well occupy our thoughts; and it will be my endeavour to lead your minds in this direction to-day.

Of all notes of a standing and a progressive church, the holiness of its members is the most important. It is the one permanent and eternal condition of the Church of God, whether militant or triumphant; without this, all party organization, all worldly respectability, all attractions and excitements, all popularity, all increase in numbers, is of no avail. The more ample our endowments, the more abundant our individual wealth, the larger our numbers, the more conspicuous our stations, the worse we are if we are unholy. It must be admitted that the tendency of all things around us is to forget this truth. Holiness is no qualification for office, no passport to society.

Wealth is the universal measure of good things. Wealth is the secret of power in the Church and in the State. To gain it appears to many to be the sum total of human happiness. To lose it seems to lose all that makes life worth having.

An immense responsibility, therefore, rests upon the clergy and laity of our church, for there is but one gospel standard for both, to be a holy body. More dutiful, unostentatious, self-sacrificing piety is required in all of us, and a deeper study of Holy Scripture, because objections are commonly urged against its inspiration and authenticity, which formerly were never heard of; and a more dutiful obedience to the rules laid down in our book of Common Prayer, for how can we expect our flocks to comply with our exhortations, if we break the rules of the Church every day of our lives, and our whole tone and temper be adverse to its spirit? How can the loose morality and sinking faith of multitudes in every land be looked upon without a jealous fear for our own condition? When a notorious atheist and teacher of immorality, who would take an oath, regarding it as a farce, is elected to the British Parliament, and when legislators nearer home proclaim themselves absolved from all reference to Scripture rules in matters where the very basis of faith and morality rests on the word of God, we may well see what firmness and courage are required of us to stand sternly by the truth of Scripture, and to abide by its holy and prudent restraints upon our passions. Nor is there a more important source of strength in our efforts after holiness than *quietness*, properly understood. The mechanical inventions of modern religionism are so complicated, and its demands so incessant and imperious, that a clergyman in the full tide of popularity seems deprived of time for reflection, study and meditation. Hurried from platform to platform, incessantly framing motions and contriving constitutions, soliciting new speeches or delivering them himself, he is in danger of becoming a talking machine, suddenly set in motion, without control, direction or profitable result. Holiness seems frittered away and broken into loose fragments by never-ending excitements of the mere intellect, forgetting that "the talk of the lips leadeth only to

penury." What a transition from this endless talk must be the deep silence of Eternity!

Such thoughts may surely be deepened by the reflection that in the last three years the hand of Death has been heavy upon us, no less than seven of our small band having been called to their eternal home: Mr. Milner, at the great age of 91; Mr. Wood, aged 87; Mr. Allan Coster, at the age of 80, and Canon Harrison, all having preceded me in their laborious work in New Brunswick; and Mr. Carr, Mr. C. G. Coster and Mr. Woodman, ordained to the priesthood by me, and cut off in the midst of a career of usefulness and in the prime of life. Thus those who lived in the early days of the Province, when the greater part of Church of England missions to the heathen were unknown, and those who have witnessed great changes in all our relations, political and religious, have gone down to the grave together, leaving us to question ourselves, which of us shall go next, and what is our preparation for the eternal world?

I spoke of the progress of our Church. With a full sense of all that has been left undone or done amiss, I desire thankfully to acknowledge the loving zeal and earnestness with which both clergy and laity have prompted and seconded my imperfect efforts to serve them. In constant visitation of the Diocese, it is impossible not to rejoice in the earnestness of the clergy and their flocks; in a greater degree of reverence, without which no service of prayer and praise can be acceptable to God or beneficial to ourselves; in increased opportunities of spiritual privileges both on the Lord's Day and on other days; in a more systematic and faithful preparation for Confirmation; in a far larger proportion of the confirmed (in many cases the whole number) who become apparently sincere, outwardly reverent, and, I hope, habitual communicants; in the loving care bestowed on the material buildings themselves, in regard to which, the expense of maintenance of churches falls wholly on the Parishioners; in the number of persons who on week days and even in the time of harvest crowd to country churches to welcome their Bishop and communicate with him; in the unpaid and

untiring labour of many hardly worked men of business who never make their labour an excuse for neglecting to give their most valuable assistance ; and in a great general increase (with a few exceptions) both of subscriptions and donations to the maintenance of the Church and the clergy. God grant that there may be as great an increase of personal holiness, of temperance, sobriety and chastity, of charity and unity amongst us, such as our holy religion requires. It is also a subject of congratulation that more young men, natives of the Province, are devoting themselves to the work of the Ministry. Some of them during their college career have proved most energetic and useful helpers to the Church in Sunday school and occasional week-day services ; and I hope the time may come when the wealthier members of our Church will not withhold their sons from the Ministry because it is a profession poorly paid, but will think themselves honoured by being able to bring into the service of God some part of that wealth with which He has bountifully endowed them.

I also rejoice that there has grown up among us gradually, in the course of years, a better general understanding of each other's intentions, a more hearty and fraternal concord, such as Christians should do all in their power to cherish, and that the spirit of malevolent suspicion and perpetual insinuation of ignorance and faithlessness has been put down, and has received a severe check, as I hope, by God's blessing it always will. Our Synod meetings, where the freest discussion is allowed, have no doubt contributed to this good end ; and the alarming predictions respecting their result have proved to be without foundation.

A few words of advice from me on some of the subjects first spoken of will, I trust, not seem out of place.

And first, of Confirmation. Important as it is to make a faithful preparation for the rite, it is sometimes forgotten that the real work is after confirmation. It is then that the most dangerous time of a young person's life begins ; when the heart, susceptible of good or bad influences, has been for a short time impressed by the earnestness of the pastor, but is sure to meet

with counteracting influences, with ridicule, with temptation in one or more of its varied forms, with the unhealthy excitements or even heresies of the day, fostered by self-conceit and spiritual pride. How many have been lost to the Church and to God from the delusive notion that our work is done when we have seen them confirmed. Considering, therefore, the ignorance and instability of the young, communicants' classes may be found of advantage, that good habits may be formed and strengthened, and help may be given in the many difficulties which surround the young. The pastor will thus be looked upon not as a mere preacher, but as a guide and director, to assist the conscience in forming correct and godly determinations, and in bringing them into action. Among these good habits thus nourished will be the habit of daily prayer, of strict honesty, temperance and chastity, of constant communion, and, I believe, of early communion. For without laying down this as an indispensable rule, one's feeling of ordinary reverence would lead one to see how well it becomes a sinner who owes everything to God's pardoning mercy in Christ, to ask for spiritual pardon and strength, and receive his spiritual food before, and not after, he has been all day long enjoying God's temporal bounty, just as every Christian asks a blessing before he sits down to meat. Another good habit which should unquestionably be formed in the young is that of dedicating to God a tenth of their substance, small or large. Did our laity universally act on this rule we should now be in a very different position. Till they come up to this scriptural requisite they can hardly expect God's blessing on their profits and possessions.

A great financial crisis is now passing over our Church. In the early times of our Church Society, though our income was small, we had always a surplus, which for some years was funded for the benefit of widows and orphans of the clergy. We have now by the liberal legacies of a few churchmen made investments to a large amount, but we have lost and are still losing a good part of the annual donations of the Society at home; and we have greatly enlarged the sphere of our work and the number of our workers. It seems to me to be perfect-

ly clear that our retrenchments should not begin with the "new and poor missions," to aid which our Society was founded, but with old and able missions planted thirty, forty or fifty years ago, which ought with less liberal aid, or without any aid, to sustain themselves. Some of these missions have now become self-sustaining, and it is most remarkable, that while the self-sustaining missions have contributed handsomely to the deficiency fund, some of our oldest missions, still sustained by others' crutches, have contributed scarcely anything worth speaking of. I would remind such backward people that when the Israelites "worshipped their idols it turned to their own decay," and if we worship our silver and gold our Church will decay. It will perish; and it will not be a joy forever, but a thing of the past. "There is a sore evil I have seen," says the wise man, "riches kept by the owners thereof to their hurt, but those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son and there is nothing in his hand."

I would now say a few words on Sunday Schools. It is intended, I understand, to have what is called a centenary celebration in honor of the originator of Sunday schools. You will all remember that long before this step was taken the Church herself had made wise provision for the instruction of the young by the Church Catechism, and by directions to the clergy for public catechizing. But now that Sunday schools have become a settled institution among us, it would, I think, be the most beneficial way of turning the present year to good account, if the clergy and the teachers under them were to meet and take counsel on the difficulties and obstacles they meet with in conducting such schools, and on the best methods of making them useful to the Church at large. Having been at an early period of my ministry called both to found and to preside over large Sunday schools, I proceed to throw out some hints founded on my own experience.

There are three evils which meet us at the outset. First, the danger of leading parents to suppose that the Sunday school absolves them from their responsibility to teach their own children. So common is this evil that many parents neglect

even to see that the Sunday school lessons are learned before the children go to school. The second danger is that the children should imagine that religion is only to last until they are grown up, and old enough to leave the school. A third danger arises from the fact that many children who go to Sunday schools never go to church. This perhaps arises in some measure from our exacting more from young children than they are able to bear. When a child under ten years of age attends a morning Sunday school, it is unreasonable to expect that child to be present at the whole of a morning service lasting an hour and a half or two hours. The sermon, at all events, is both wearisome and useless to them, for they do not understand it. It also arises from the common neglect of both parents to attend morning service. Mothers (I am aware) are often prevented from attendance by the care of young children.

To meet these various difficulties I observe that it is even more necessary to train the teachers than the children. It is often a hard matter to secure teachers. Older and more experienced persons often shrink from the additional labour, and unhappily feel no interest in other people's children. Light minded and inexperienced young persons offer themselves, and are accepted because there is no one else to be had. In a church Sunday school no person, I think, should be employed, certainly as a teacher of the older children, who is not baptized, confirmed and a communicant. For what is teaching worth when the teacher neglects or breaks the rules of the Church without whose authority even the clergyman himself is not allowed to teach? Nor should any one be received as a teacher who objects to the use of the Church Catechism. Such presumption on the part of a young person argues the greatest unfitness for teaching; for a humble, teachable mind is needed to strengthen the like good dispositions in the young. A person who is very ignorant of the Bible and the Prayer Book is of no value as a teacher. The facts and chief doctrines of the Bible it is important for the young to know, and part of their education is their instruction in the principles and rules of worship of our Book of Common Prayer. In

a Sunday school it is highly necessary that the children should be well graded and the classes not too large, and that every teacher should have, if possible, a supernumerary to take his place when he is occasionally absent, from sickness and other causes. It is especially necessary to the diligent attendance of the children that the teacher should always visit the parents during the week, if one of the class be absent on Sunday. This labor will be almost certainly rewarded, for there are few parents who will not be sensible of the kindness, and the child itself will see that the teacher feels a personal interest in its welfare. This is doubly needful when the little one is sick. The interest felt by the teacher for the child may also be thus communicated to the parent, who may materially help the teacher in his work. Every baptized child should be trained by the teacher (gradually of course) for Confirmation. This will greatly assist the clergy in their final preparation, for they will then not have to encounter a number of untrained, ignorant young people who have everything to learn; but a class of dutiful, well instructed church members, who know why they were baptized, and why it is their duty to be confirmed, and what privileges and blessings they may hope for from God the HOLY GHOST. It is very important that the books used in a Sunday school should be of a uniform character, and that if preparatory catechisms are used for the younger children they should be such as include all the great facts of Christianity. Every teacher should try to instil these facts into the minds of children. The common practice of reading little religious novelles to children is, I think, to be avoided, as it shows an incapacity for good, honest downright work. A child thoroughly well taught will make one of the best teachers when grown up, and will feel a personal interest in the success of the school. Children's services have been introduced of late and are likely to be extremely beneficial. Far too little pains have been taken by the Church to meet the wants and improve the understandings of young children. We are so accustomed to praise our Liturgy, that we forget that it is really composed for adults, who are supposed to have no difficulty in finding their places in the

order of the service, who are sufficiently educated to understand and enjoy the prayers and hymns introduced into it, who can keep their attention fixed for a full hour without weariness, and at the end of that hour are ready for a sermon, of at least half an hour more. Whoever can do this, I am sure a child ten or twelve years cannot; yet this long service is the only worship offered to our little ones. I often think of a remark made by a child, which has a great deal of truth in it: "They," that is the clergy, "never think how tired one is;" and if that weariness end in giving up attendance at church altogether, I fear that we have ourselves to thank for it. I think the Synod would do a very good work in drawing up a short service of this sort for children's use, taken from our formularies, with hymns, not to last more than twenty minutes, with, or if time do not permit, without an address of ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. Once get the children thoroughly interested in it, and we shall educate them for the longer service when they are able to receive it. It might be choral or plain, according to circumstances. I entirely approve of the plan lately adopted of having missionary boxes in our Sunday schools for the benefit of our Home Missions. The interest felt by the children in the work is of far more value than the money which may be collected. I hope all the clergy will favor the plan. I also think the usual custom of giving the children an annual treat requires more careful consideration. The practice of hiring large steamboats to take young children to places of public resort, has given rise to great abuses, and requires more strict watching than has hitherto been thought necessary. And here my brethren, I should close my Address, reserving my remarks on the question of a Divinity School, and on the appointment of a Coadjutor, to their proper places in the discussions of the Synod. But a strong sense of duty urges me to claim your indulgence for a short time longer, whilst I speak both to clergy and laity, here assembled, on the bill lately introduced into the Parliament of the Dominion to legalize marriage not only with a deceased wife's sister, but with the brother of a deceased husband.

Every one must see the necessity of some restraint on human passion in regard to marriage, for where no law existed in old times, mankind invariably ran into the most revolting excesses. "They took them wives," we read in the Scriptures, "of all which they chose," not only as many as they chose, but without any restraint in respect of affinity or consanguinity. These vile practices were continued after the flood among the Canaanites, and formed one of the chief reasons for their disinheritorship by the hand of God. To counteract this detestable profligacy among the Jews, and give Divine sanction to a purer code of morals in respect to marriage, Moses was commissioned in the name of God, and as His mouth-piece, to write a table of degrees for restraint of marriage within certain limits, founded on this principle announced in the beginning of the table—"None of you shall approach, (i. e. by marriage) to any that is near of kin to him. I am the Lord." The table then gives instances of such affinity or consanguinity, for no difference is made between them. It is not an exhaustive table, for marriages with a man's own daughter or his grandmother are not forbidden, and the prohibitions are given exclusively to men, though women are equally concerned. But it is evidently governed by the principle which the Lord lays down as the true foundation of the marriage relation that man and wife become one flesh, and consequently all the blood relationships which would be forbidden are equally unlawful after marriage to relations by affinity. This simple and divinely authorized rule in contradiction to the loose practices of the heathen, and even of some of the Patriarchs, is the rule of Christian morals given to us by our Lord. Even if it could be shown—which is contradicted by the whole sense of the 18th chapter of Leviticus—that this is a part of the ceremonial, not of the moral law of the Jews, we must remember that the whole object of the sermon on the Mount was to purify Christian morals from the loose glosses and interpretations which the Rabbis and others had put upon it, and that to give our sanction to any marriage connection less pure than the law here enforced on the Jews is to read God's dispensations backwards, and to lower

Christianity in favor, not of Judaism, but of Heathenism. Those, therefore, who argue that all Jewish laws are obsolete, need to be reminded that the law of the Ten Commandments is read in our Churches every Sunday, and that the Gospel spirit not only binds us to receive them in substance, but to carry them out on a higher, purer and more exacting principle than a servile adherence to the letter would indicate. Polygamy, for instance, and an easy system of divorce, were tolerated among the Jews because of the "hardness of men's hearts," but the Christian system supposes a higher power of self-restraint, and therefore demands a higher, not a lower code of morals. The very incest with a father's wife, which has been treated with so much levity in our Colonial Parliament, is by St. Paul looked on with the deepest abhorrence, and is punished with immediate excommunication.

So that if we were not bound by the table of degrees in Leviticus, which is impossible to be proved, if that table be part of God's moral law, given for the guidance of other nations beside the Jews as is there indicated, we are bound by a purer and a holier law to Christ, and it would be a most strange argument that what the lower and less perfect rule of life condemns as immoral, the higher and more perfect rule may allow. On this reasoning there is nothing whatever to prevent the legislative sanction being given to polygamy, man's passions being apparently the only admitted rule, and the word of God being entirely thrown aside as the true basis of sound legislation in religious matters.

I am aware that some kind of argument is attempted to be built on the 18th verse of the chapter in Leviticus, which in our translation is obscure. But this argument comes with a very bad grace from persons who repeatedly assert that they are not bound to consider the Levitical law at all, the whole being obsolete. And, however that verse be translated (the true meaning of it being, I believe, a condemnation of polygamy) it is monstrous to suppose the legislator to sanction in this verse a principle which he had before condemned in the rest of the chapter. The general argument is, however, sought to be set

aside by an assertion that marriage is simply a civil contract, and that, therefore, the legislature has no religious obligations to deal with. Each sect, and each man, as it would seem, is to deal with the matter so as suit his own convenience, or his conscience, if he have any. This notion of marriage being only a civil contract resembling the renting a house or the purchase of a farm, only, be it observed, much more easily broken by cheap and easy methods of divorce, is merely another mode of getting rid of our obligations to the Divine law. In these days of lawlessness each man who has a grievance,—and sinners now call their transgressions grievances and endeavour to legalize and justify them—desires an alteration of the law, not that they may sit under it, but that they may sit upon it. And when they have transgressed again, they will seek a new law to suit their new passion. Thus marriage being, as they say, only a civil contract, may be dealt with as we deal with a law of bankruptcy. Yet even in bankruptcy there must be some limit. some restraint, or otherwise all debtors might proclaim themselves absolved from payment. Property would be the only thief.

Our Church has taken the greatest pains to shew us that marriage is not merely a civil contract, but a solemn, religious obligation. It commands the clergy to begin the marriage service by telling the people that marriage was “instituted of God in the time of man’s innocency, signifying to us the spiritual marriage and unity between Christ and His Church.” How can a civil contract do this? It requires of the persons to be married a most solemn affirmation, for which they will have to answer at the “dreadful day of judgment,” that they know of no lawful impediment to their marriage. Lawful, not merely legal; for the service immediately adds that “so many as are coupled together otherwise than God’s word doth allow” are not joined together in lawful matrimony. And what is lawful or unlawful according to God’s word, in the judgment of the Church, is distinctly told us in the table of degrees affixed to our Prayer Books, “wherein,” it is said, “whosoever are related are forbidden in Scripture and our laws to marry together.” Where is the civil contract here? I am aware that an attempt

is made to assign this table of degrees to the authority of Archbishop Parker only. But the marriages forbidden by this table had always been held unlawful by the Church of England, and for fifteen centuries such marriages were held unlawful in the Church at large. To return to the marriage service. Every part of it, especially the two solemn benedictions and the invitation to receive Holy Communion "at the time of marriage, or at the first opportunity after marriage," prove that it is no mere civil contract which the Church owns as marriage. If, then, persons married "otherwise than God's word doth allow are not joined together by God, neither is their matrimony lawful," and what God's word doth not allow is assured to us by our Church in the table of degrees, and in the 99th Canon; if we, as Canadian clergy and laity, have acknowledged the Book of Common Prayer (which contains the table of degrees) to be "a true and faithful declaration of the doctrines contained in Holy Scripture"; if, moreover, a resolution of both houses of our Provincial Synod declares, that no clergyman of this Ecclesiastical Province shall knowingly solemnize a marriage forbidden by the 99th Canon of 1603, how can we deny the force of such solemn obligations? I do not hesitate to say that if a clergyman of our Church do not consider himself bound by them, I cannot conceive any other that would bind his conscience, and I should distrust his declarations on any subject whatever. Besides, are we going to stop in this downward course of license? Already our legislators propose to go beyond the demands of agitators of the question in England. Our bill proposes to sanction the marriage of a woman to a deceased husband's brother. "Why then," as Lord Hatherly says, "should not a man's own brother desire his daughter in marriage, or look even to the reversion of his wife." We may be sure that ingenious arguments would be found even for this revolting connection. But some are prepared to go even beyond this, and even bid us be of good courage and dare to do what St. Paul tells us "is not so much as named among the heathen," to take in marriage our father's wife. This language has, I understand, been supposed to be said in a joke, as if no man would desire it. In

most instances it would, no doubt, be improbable, but it is far from being impossible. A man, we will suppose, marries early in life and his wife bears him sons who are grown up when his wife dies. He then selects a wife very many years younger than himself. Meanwhile one of his sons marries early, and his wife dies leaving children. Finally the father dies. Why then, if man's appetite is to be his sole guide, may not the son select his father's wife, no older than himself, to be the guardian of his children; and pretend that no one can possibly feel so much affection for them as his step-mother and be so suited to be their guide? Then if she bears children it is to one who ought to consider himself her son, and her children would be brothers and sisters to his children. This may be considered an exaggerated case, but it is perfectly possible, and if we are to follow advice given, either in seriousness or in sport, all the hideous consequences would follow. When we try principles we have a right to consider extreme and possible cases. The fact is, that the transgression of a Divine law always proceeds in a downward course and never ascends to the source of all purity, to Him who says, "be ye holy, for I am holy." I shall not dwell much on the social discomfort of this law, great as it undoubtedly would be. But I would observe that by it the happiness of the many would be sacrificed to the passions of the few. And why is the comfort and peace of a thousand homes to be thus sacrificed? "Why are sisters-in-law living with widowed brothers-in-law, as sisters, to be ordered either to quit the house or marry them? Why is distrust to be sown where perfect love, frank familiarity, sweet and pure affection were before unrestrained?" "As a general rule among decent persons of all ranks," said the venerated author of the Christian Year, "a law which would place the wife's sister in the same relation to the husband as any other unmarried woman, not only *might*, but *must*, in all cases, separate the wife's sister from the family, not only after the wife's death, but in case of her long illness or absence. She will require the same protection that any other young woman would in the like circumstances." So that the benefit of the law would be the enjoyment

of their transgressions by the present law breakers, and its evils would be innumerable; among the chief of which would be great distress to the keepers of the Divine rule, great bitterness between families who keep and families who break the rule, great confusion and trouble among the clergy, and loosening of bonds of morality in various directions among the community at large. You may now ask of me, perhaps, what are we, the clergy, to do? I answer plainly, you are to decline to solemnize such marriages. If the State relax its obligations and pronounces marriage a civil contract only, the Divine law and the law of our Church is still binding upon you. You are to be guardians and defenders, not betrayers of public morals. Nor ought persons who live in incest to be admitted to Holy Communion. But there is more to be done. Between this time and the next session of the Dominion Parliament the clergy should endeavor to circulate among the laity sound and wholesome truth on this subject. I may mention such tracts as Lord Hatherly's "Vindication of the Law Prohibiting Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister," Mr. Keble's tract against "Profane Dealing with Holy Matrimony," the Lord Bishop of Nova Scotia's "Reasons for Rejecting the Proposed Marriage Law," and a very useful catechism on marriage, with an appendix showing the Divine authority for the table of prohibited degrees, by the Rev. J. J. Curling and Rev. J. F. Phelps of the Diocese of Newfoundland.

I think that petitions should be prepared in all our Parishes against the proposed Bill. And as Scotland always pronounced against such an alteration of the marriage law, I entertain the hope that the Presbyterian bodies here may stand with us in this matter, as well as others who wish to prevent the evil which will arise from an alteration in the law.

I must ask your indulgence, dear brethren, for having detained you longer than I had at first intended, but the importance of the subjects referred to, will, I hope, be my justification. And in regard to the other important topics for consideration and discussion at the present Synod, I pray that we may be guided by that heavenly wisdom promised to those who ask it, and follow its guidance, and desire to live by its wise and salutary rules.